

29 MAY 2001

Mahathir-Kaamatan

AVOID BEING NARROW-MINDED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- The people should avoid being narrow-minded in order to create a country that is united, creative, innovative and visionary, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said a prejudiced lot would only led to the destruction of the country's aspirations.

"The people must, instead, nurture harmony and unity," he said in a message to the people in Sabah to mark the start of the Kaamatan (harvest) festival tomorrow.

"Respect for each other and cooperation in every endeavour will ensure a meaningful life and progress."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia, with its plural society, must have peace and harmony for development goals to be achieved.

"If there is instability or ethnic conflict, efforts to develop the country will fail, much to the detriment of the people themselves," he said.

The Prime Minister said festivals of the various races in the country are made public holidays to make the celebrations more meaningful and to enable other races to celebrate it too.

"Without a doubt, the various races in the country are able to practise their faith and culture unhindered. In fact, some religious or cultural celebrations have been accepted as official events by the Federal or state government although it may only concern a minority group," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government wished to see the various races in the country live in peace and harmony.

"We should be proud of the close ties established among the people. We have been very successful in promoting unity in a plural society," he said.

The Kaamatan festival is celebrated by the Kadazandusun and Murut communities in Sabah.

Dr Mahathir said the festival, acknowledged as an official event in the state by the government, is celebrated over two days -- May 30 and 31 -- every year.

The festival is celebrated for a month by locals in Sabah.

-- BERNAMA

RV HS THG